

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 3 and 15 are cancelled herein without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 1, 2, 4-14, and 16-20 are pending. Claims 1, 7, 13, and 16 are amended. Claims 1, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 13 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In particular, dependent claim 7 has been amended to address the Examiner's objection,

independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of objected-to claim 15 and intervening claim 3,

independent claim 13 has been amended has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of objected-to claim 15 and claim 3 from which claim 15 depends, and dependent claims 3 and 15 have been cancelled.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of

appeal. This Amendment reduces the issues on appeal by rewriting independent claims 1 and 13 to incorporate allowable subject matter, and canceling claims 3 and 15, thereby reducing the number of pending claims. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 5, 6, 11, 12, 18, and 20 have been allowed, and that claims 7-10 and claim 15 are objected to.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application.

As indicated above, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of objected-to claim 15 and intervening claim 3,

independent claim 13 has been amended has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of objected-to claim 15 and claim 3 from which claim 15 depends.

Therefore, **independent claims 1 and 13** and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 7-10 because of several informalities. In order to overcome this objection, the Applicants have amended independent claim 7 in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this

objection are respectfully requested. **Independent claim 7** and the claims depending therefrom are now in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1, 3, and 4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McDowell (U.S. 6,083,106) in view of Yamazaki et al. (U.S. 5,547,382) and McClellion (U.S. 7,156,026);

claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McDowell, in view of Yamazaki et al. and McClellion, and further in view of Simpkins et al. (U.S. 5,431,569);

claims 13, and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamazaki et al. in view of McClellion, McDowell and Tosaki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,989,123);

claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McDowell, Yamazaki et al., McClellion, and further in view of Uebel (U.S. 4,199,264); and

claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McDowell and Yamazaki et al., and further in view of McClellion and Tosaki et al.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Amendments to Independent Claims 1 and 13

As noted above, and while not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the present application, each of **independent**

claims 1 and 13 has been amended herein to incorporate the subject matter of objected-to claim 15 and intervening claim 3.

Therefore, **independent claims 1 and 13** are in condition for allowance.

Dependent Claims

Dependent claims 3 and 15 have been cancelled, and dependent claim 16 has been amended to depend from independent claim 1.

All dependent claims are in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

All pending claims are now in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

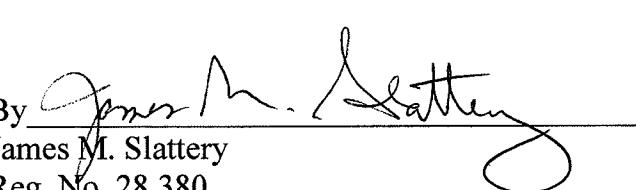
If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 208-4030(direct line).

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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